

knew in his heart that France could only afford one enemy.

It was natural that German statesmen should attempt to turn the Fashoda mood to their own account, for the bitter humiliation temporarily diverted part of the Nationalist fire to England, described by the *Echo de Paris* as the eternal enemy. What particularly rankled was Salisbury's refusal to grant or even to discuss compensation. The Kaiser, wrote the French Ambassador in February, 1899, was disposed to a rapprochement. The Naval Attache at Berlin reported a conversation in which he expressed his pleasure at the reception of German ships in Algiers and Tunis, and added that a French ship would be very well received at a German port. "His Majesty is happy to see French public opinion better appreciating the real sentiments of Germany towards France, and he hopes that a real *entente* will soon be reached." The Continent, he added, must unite in self-defence especially against the dictation of England and America. A few days after the outbreak of the South African war Billow spoke to the French Ambassador of the identity of their interests in different parts of the world. "In Africa you see that our interests are absolutely the same. Except the little triangle in regard to which we reached an arrangement with England last year, there is no point where we could not agree." Delcasse replied that Billow's opinion deserved to be examined in concert with Russia ; "but I note that his conviction has never led the German Government to formulate any proposition." When the French Ambassador asked the German Foreign Minister if he could explain how he conceived the reciprocal interests, he replied that he must have time to reflect. A few days after this curious remark, which would have been more relevant if the invitation to discussion

had come from Paris, the Kaiser journeyed to England for the first time since the Kruger telegram, and Chamberlain, after conversations with Billow, argued in his historic speech at Leicester for an alliance or entente with Germany and the United States. Neither Berlin nor Washington welcomed the approach, and Billow, caring more for Russian than for British friendship, ignored Chamberlain's advances and proclaimed his favourite doctrine of the free hand.

The Boer War was as heartily detested in France as in Germany, but Delcasse took a more detached view of the competition than most of his countrymen. He had plans in his head which would require the friendship or at any rate the acquiescence of England, and he had no intention of steering his